

Rye Youth Soccer Employee Handbook

1. Rye Youth Soccer Philosophy

Mission Statement

Rye Youth Soccer is committed to providing the community with a model of quality youth development, education, and inspiration through the sport of soccer.

Our trainers and volunteers play an essential role in bringing this mission to life. Every interaction with a player should support not only their growth as a soccer player, but also their confidence, character, creativity, independence, and enjoyment of the game.

Our Philosophy

At Rye Youth Soccer, player development is guided by five core principles:

- **Develop technical ball mastery.**
- **Instill positive character behaviors.**
- **Encourage creative play.**
- **Create fun, competitive practices that promote intrinsic learning.**
- **Promote independent thinking and tactical application.**

Our responsibility is not simply to prepare players to win their next game. We are responsible for creating an environment that allows players to develop over time.

Trainers should therefore avoid over-coaching, solving every problem for the player, or placing short-term results above long-term development. Players must be given opportunities to experiment, make decisions, experience success and failure, and discover solutions for themselves.

Style of Play

While teams may vary in age, ability, formation, and tactical detail, Rye Youth Soccer maintains a consistent overall style of play.

We want our teams to:

- Be comfortable and technically proficient on the ball.
- Look to progress the ball through the thirds of the field.
- Play out from the back whenever possible.
- Pressure the ball with intensity and organization when out of possession.
- Attack with pace and purpose.

Trainers should teach these principles in age-appropriate ways. The language, activities, and tactical expectations used with a U6 player should be significantly different from those used with a U13+ player, while still supporting the same long-term philosophy.

2. Program Structure

Rye Youth Soccer is structured to provide a progressive developmental pathway from a child's first introduction to soccer through their final years of youth and high school competition.

The program is designed around the understanding that player development is not linear. Players develop at different rates physically, technically, mentally, socially, and emotionally. Our role is to create an environment that meets players where they are while continuing to challenge them to improve.

The primary developmental stages are:

1. Mini Garnets — U3-U5
2. Intramural & Pre-Travel — U6-U8
3. Travel Soccer (7v7) — U9-U10
4. Travel Soccer (9v9) — U11-U12
5. Travel Soccer (11v11) — U13+

Each stage builds upon the previous one.

Trainers should understand where their players are within this pathway and avoid introducing expectations that do not match the players' stage of development.

3. Developing the Player

Our Responsibility

Our responsibility at Rye Youth Soccer is to develop each individual player's technical ability, confidence, understanding of the game, and ability to make independent decisions.

We believe in following the Rye Youth Soccer Player Development Guide and using a consistent developmental approach throughout a player's time with the club.

The Player Development Guide outlines the progression of a Rye Youth Soccer player from their first soccer experience through their final high school game.

The central objective throughout every age group is development.

Winning, league standings, and competitive outcomes may become increasingly relevant as players progress through the program, but they should never replace our responsibility to develop the individual and the team.

Fall and Spring Seasons

Rye Youth Soccer provides programming throughout the fall, winter and spring seasons.

Trainers should understand that every season is part of a larger developmental journey. A coach should not approach a single season as an isolated opportunity to achieve a result. Instead, each season should contribute to the player's long-term growth.

Mini Garnets

Development Theme: Me and My Ball

This is often a child's first experience with organized soccer.

Each player is introduced to a world of fun, creativity, movement, and imagination. Practices should follow engaging themes designed to ignite a child's passion for soccer.

Trainer and Coach Expectations

At this age, employees should prioritize:

- Fun and enjoyment.
- Comfort around the ball.
- Individual exploration.
- Basic movement and coordination.
- Creativity and imagination.
- Positive encouragement.
- Building confidence.

Sessions should avoid long explanations, excessive lines, and unnecessary technical instruction.

Players should spend as much time as possible actively moving and interacting with a ball.

The objective is not to create finished soccer players. The objective is to create a positive first experience that encourages children to continue playing and exploring the game.

Our director of coaching, Chris Skelton, distributes a weekly curriculum for coaches to implement. Players are placed into 'comfort level' groups, and sessions should reflect the need of the children.

Intramural & Pre-Travel Soccer

Development Theme: Me and My Ball / Me and My Partner

Practices are focused on giving players significant time on the ball, allowing them to discover different skills and develop basic motor abilities.

Sessions should be less about constant instruction and more about creating structured opportunities for players to:

- Try new skills.
- Experience success.
- Experience failure.
- Solve simple problems.
- Develop confidence.
- Learn how a partner can help achieve a common goal.

The introduction of “**Me and My Partner**” helps players begin understanding how another player can support them in achieving an objective.

Our director of coaching, Chris Skelton, distributes a weekly curriculum for coaches to implement. Players are placed into ‘comfort level’ groups, and sessions should reflect the need of the children.”

Heavy focus on fun development games progressing to small sided duels (1v1, 2v1, 2v2...) help build the confidence of our young players.

Weekend Games

Games should follow the same developmental philosophy. Each Saturday teams play two games.

Matches should provide players with a structured small-sided environment where they can:

- Touch the ball frequently.
- Make decisions.
- Explore different positions.
- Learn basic principles of the game.
- Experience the joy of competition.

Winning is not the primary objective.

The enjoyment, confidence, and learning experience of every player should remain central.

Games are organized and supervised by Jared Small and Rich Savage. Players are placed in colors for the season and play to games each week against a new opponent. Parent volunteers manage their team with officiating led by High School referees.

The games are played in a 4v4 format but are sometimes smaller due to attendance numbers. Matches should never exceed this format.

Coaching Expectations

Parent volunteers should:

- Keep instructions simple and age-appropriate.
- Encourage players rather than direct every action.
- Allow players time to solve problems.

- Celebrate effort and creativity.
- Avoid placing excessive importance on scores or results.
- Create an environment where mistakes are viewed as part of learning.

Travel Soccer — U9-U10

Development Theme: From “I” Toward “Us”

This is the player's first experience with league play and the 7v7 format.

Practices should remain primarily focused on developing the individual player. Foot skills, technical ability, comfort in possession, and confidence on the ball remain essential.

Players should continue to receive significant time on the ball, with sessions designed to encourage comfort in:

- 1v1 situations.
- 2v2 situations.
- Attacking and defending.
- Basic movement.
- Supporting teammates.
- Recognizing simple tactical relationships.

As team play becomes more important, players begin transitioning from the concept of “I” toward “Us.”

They are introduced to the idea that movement, support, and teamwork can help a group achieve a common objective.

Practice Expectations

Trainers should avoid unnecessary interruptions.

Coaching should be purposeful and concise. Players need time to play, experiment, and discover.

A successful practice at this age should include substantial active playing time and frequent opportunities for players to make decisions.

Don't steal the struggle. Set the environment in which mistakes occur and for individual/group learning to take place.

If the practice looks like a soccer match, perhaps a smaller format with clear learning outcomes, you are on the right path.

Game Day Expectations

Game-day coaching should emphasize the player's ability to express themselves and learn through both success and failure.

Parent and coaching instruction from the sidelines should be kept to a minimum. Only necessary information should be provided.

Players should be given opportunities to:

- Express creativity.
- Take risks.
- Make mistakes.
- Recover from mistakes.
- Solve problems independently.

Playing Time and Positions

Equal playing time should be provided to all players.

Every child should also be exposed to different positions on the field.

The purpose is to develop complete, adaptable players rather than assigning permanent positions too early in the developmental pathway.

No yelling at the children. It doesn't help, and the parents--rightly--don't like it. Applaud, give minimal supportive advice, wait for 1-on-1 conversations to implement learning.

Travel Soccer — U11-U12

Development Theme: “We”

League play becomes increasingly competitive, with scores recorded and league standings introduced.

The previous concept of “Us” now develops into a stronger “We” philosophy.

The team becomes increasingly important to success on the field, while individual development remains essential.

Players transition into the 9v9 format.

Additional rules and expectations, including the introduction of punting and heading according to the applicable age and competition rules, become part of the player's experience. Build-out lines are no longer in play.

Technical Development

The following areas remain central:

- First touch.
- Comfort in possession.
- Ball progression.
- Passing and receiving.
- Movement and support.
- Playing out from the back.
- Progressing through the thirds of the field.

Players should continue to develop their technical ability in ways that support effective team play.

Trainers should help players understand that good team soccer depends on the ability of individual players to execute technically while recognizing movement, space, support, and the needs of teammates.

Game Day Philosophy

There is a greater emphasis on competitive results.

However, the core responsibility of the coach remains player and team development.

Coaches should balance the desire to compete with the responsibility to develop players for the long term.

Playing Time

At this stage, **fair playing time** is introduced.

Playing time may reflect factors including:

- Attendance.
- Effort.
- Attitude.

- Training commitment.
- Current skill ability.
- Tactical suitability for a particular role or situation.

Trainers should apply these considerations fairly and consistently.

Playing-time decisions should never be based on favoritism or personal relationships.

If you are unsure of what is fair, discuss with Chris Skelton or Erica Stewart before lowering a player's playing time. There is no situation in which we want players to sit on the bench for long stretches of play.

Parent and coaching instruction should remain limited.

Players at this stage should increasingly demonstrate:

- Problem-solving ability.
- Resilience.
- Independence.
- Communication.
- Understanding of basic tactical concepts.

Trainers should resist the temptation to control every moment of the game from the sideline. If you are constantly yelling instruction, this is usually an indicator that your training sessions aren't effective enough to implement growth and trust in young athletes.

Travel Soccer — U13+

Development Theme: Independent and Competitive Players

League play transitions to the 11v11 format and increasingly resembles the adult game, subject to applicable youth competition rules (minutes per half as an example).

Players should develop a strong understanding of both attacking and defending principles, positional play, and their responsibilities within the team structure.

Player Expectations

Players should become increasingly comfortable:

- Communicating with teammates.
- Sharing ideas.
- Asking questions.
- Leading discussions.
- Taking responsibility.
- Performing under pressure.
- Understanding their positional role.
- Recognizing tactical situations.

Technical ability should continue to be challenged, particularly in high-pressure situations.

Players will now have more of an established set position. If we have done our jobs effectively, players should feel comfortable in multiple roles and can be utilized by their coach as such.

Formations and Systems

Coaches may introduce different formations and systems of play as appropriate for the team and competition.

However, the overall Rye Youth Soccer philosophy and style of play should remain consistent.

Regardless of formation, our teams should strive to:

- Be technically comfortable on the ball.
- Build and progress through the field.
- Play out from the back when appropriate.
- Defend with intensity and organization.
- Attack with pace and purpose.

The formation is a tool. It should support player development and team understanding rather than become the primary objective.

4. Parent Volunteers

Parent volunteers are integral to the operation and success of Rye Youth Soccer.

Their dedication helps create positive, organized, educational, and safe experiences for players throughout the program.

Trainers should treat parent volunteers as important partners while also maintaining clear leadership and communication.

Intramural & Pre-Travel Soccer

Rye Youth Soccer is fortunate to have parent volunteers coach Saturday games.

These volunteers often help guide young players through their first structured soccer matches.

Their role can significantly shape a child's first impression of the sport and help create an early love for soccer.

The Parent Volunteer's Role

At this stage, the focus is on:

- Fun.
- Basic principles of soccer.
- Participation.
- Encouragement.
- Positive team experiences.

Winning is not important.

The enjoyment and experience of the players should always take priority over the result.

Trainers should provide parent volunteers with clear guidance regarding the developmental philosophy of the age group and encourage them to:

- Keep instructions simple.
- Encourage all players.
- Avoid excessive sideline coaching.
- Promote participation.
- Celebrate effort and improvement.
- Maintain a positive and respectful environment.

Travel Soccer Parent Volunteers

Each Travel Soccer team is assigned one Rye Youth Soccer staff member for the season.

The goal is also to have two parent volunteers available to support the team.

Parent volunteers play an important role in the organization and operation of the team.

1. Opposition Communication

Parent volunteers may communicate with the opposition to confirm:

- Game location.
- Game start time.
- Any schedule changes.
- Appropriate uniform colors.

Information should then be communicated clearly and promptly to the team.

2. Team Communication

Parent volunteers may assist with communicating:

- Game information.
- Schedule changes.
- Practice changes.
- Important team reminders.

Trainers should ensure that communication is accurate, professional, and consistent.

3. Leading and Assisting on Game Days

Rye Youth Soccer staff members may coach more than one team.

As a result, a staff member may not be able to attend every match.

Rye Youth Soccer aims to have staff members attend as many games as possible throughout the season. Staff members will notify Chris Skelton or Erica Stewart if they struggle to attend.

When a staff member is present, parent volunteers should support the staff member by:

- Assisting with player organization.
- Providing appropriate and constructive sideline support.
- Helping address injuries or problems that arise.
- Reinforcing a positive team culture.

When a Rye Youth Soccer staff member is not present, the designated lead parent volunteer and assistant may lead the team for the game.

The developmental philosophy of Rye Youth Soccer should remain consistent regardless of who is leading the team.

4. Parent Volunteers at Practices

Parent volunteers are welcome to attend practices but are not expected to do so.

Rye Youth Soccer staff members are responsible for leading practices.

Staff should communicate the weekly theme or developmental focus to the parent coaching team when appropriate.

This communication helps create consistency between practices and games.

5. Creating a Positive Team Culture

Most importantly, parent volunteers help create a positive team environment.

Every volunteer should contribute to an experience that is:

- Fun.
- Educational.
- Inclusive.
- Respectful.
- Safe.
- Developmentally appropriate.

Trainers should support volunteers, communicate expectations clearly, and address concerns professionally and promptly.

Trainer Standards for Working With Parent Volunteers

To maintain consistency across Rye Youth Soccer, trainers should:

- Clearly explain the club's developmental philosophy.
- Communicate schedules and expectations in advance whenever possible.
- Provide parent volunteers with the information they need to succeed.
- Respect the time and commitment of volunteers.
- Maintain professional leadership and final responsibility for the soccer environment.
- Ensure that personal opinions or competitive pressures do not override the club's developmental philosophy.

Parent volunteers are partners in the player's experience. A strong relationship between staff and volunteers helps create a better experience for players and families.

Core Principle: Player First

Every trainer and volunteer should return to one central question when making decisions:

“What best supports the development and experience of the player?”

Whether planning a practice, selecting an activity, coaching a game, communicating with parents, evaluating a player, or working with volunteers, the long-term development and well-being of the player should remain at the center of our decisions.

At Rye Youth Soccer, we are not simply teaching soccer.

We are helping young people develop confidence, resilience, creativity, teamwork, independence, character, and a lifelong connection to the game.

That responsibility belongs to every member of the Rye Youth Soccer team.